

Precilia Nguyen

Zoot Suit Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play takes place in the city of Angels in California (Los Angeles) during the 1940s and Henry Reyna is the star. El Pachuco is his suave, charismatic conscious. The play begins with Henry and his Chicano buddies getting ready for a night of fun and dancing before Henry leaves for the Marines.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

Henry and his friends are arrested for the murder of Jose Williams. This case is infamously known as the Sleepy Lagoon murder.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

This is the week that Henry will be joining the Marines. Ironically these are the same people who are beating up his fellow Chicano youths.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will Henry ever receive justice, and if so, will he still want to join the Marines?

5. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

I think the most theatrical moment of the play has to be when people add on the different titles and perspectives of Henry Reyna, because he wasn't just some Chicano youth villainized by the mainstream media. He was a leader, a brother, a man of honor, and so on. It told the audience that people are not black or white, there's grey areas everywhere. This moment tells the audience that we didn't just lose another Chicano youth to the system, but that we lost Henry Reyna who had so much potential.

6. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Racism, discrimination, moral conflict, injustice

7. What does Henry want? How does the playwright resolve his wants at the end of the play? How does this resolution compare with the real Henry, as indicated in the documentary?

Henry wants to live a life that is worthy of respect and admiration. He wants to do his parents and his girlfriend proud, and that is why he wanted to join the Marines and to be a good example for his fellow Chicano youths. However, his race actually becomes an obstacle for him, because it lands him in hot water with the police which leads to his arrest. The playwright does not resolve his wants at the end. His life went on the same as it did in real life: disappointing and addicted to drugs. Henry Reyna in both the play and in real life died a disappointing death.

8. Note which version of the play in production you saw (either the DVD version or the HS stage version), then discuss the way the designers move from place to place (scene to scene) and how effectively that is for communicating the dramatic action.

I watched the HS stage version! The designers mainly depended on lighting and music to set the scenes, especially music for transition. They also liked to fade the scenes in and out in order for the stagehands to be able to move in and out the different props. During dramatic moments, having intense light and music really sets the mood for the audience and to anticipate what's next. The dances help tell the story of what's going on between the characters and helps keep the audience entertained. I personally really love strong monochromatic colors for dramatic moments, so when Pachuco was angry and the light was a violent red washing over him, it really made an emphasis with me as an audience member.

9. Choose a character from the play and discuss how the costume designer has accentuated (focused) the audience attention on that character. What are some of the details of the costume that strike you as interesting or exaggerated?

El Pachuco was all angry lines and sharp details. His zoot suit was a bright red shirt only barely subdued by a violent black blazer. He commanded attention with his outfit by being bigger and better, but also was muted in the background due to how dark the outer colors were. His hair was slicked back and shoes were always shiny; he stood out as a dark horse against the vividly colored-dressed youths in the room. His confidence showed in the way he dresses and the way he walks and talks. He demands attention already solely based on how he looks and then controls it with the way he acts.

10. Lighting plays a big role in the DVD and the staged version by the HS. Discuss the use of light to accentuate characters and scenes, choosing a particular scene from the production to discuss.

Light really helps transition the scenes and also set the scene, such as atmospheric lighting for the club scenes, all blue lighting for the lagoon, etc., and for characters, the lighting accentuates their mood and feelings. A particular scene is when Pachuco has his zoot suit just ripped off of his body, a huge form of disrespect. The stage was washed in red and darkness to symbolize his anger and his sadness over the racist injustice. When Henry is left alone, he is also washed in

darkness on stage and only a single light will be reflected on him and Pachucho. This shows isolation.



